

# April + Long Beach adds up to wins for Al Unser Jr.

If it's April, it must be time for Al Unser Jr. to sweep into Long Beach and plunder the riches of the Toyota Grand Prix.

After all, Unser has won the race a record six times, including the last two. From 1988 to 1991, he won here four straight times.

This year, he's back with a powerful Team Penske for the third straight season, reunited with his 1994 Penske teammate, Paul Tracy, who won the Toyota Grand Prix of Long Beach in 1993. They'll both be wheeling the Marlboro/Penske Mercedes-Benzes.

The 35-year-old Unser, a two-time IndyCar World Series champion who has earned 11 career wins, started the season with an eighth-place finish in Miami, then roared back

to finish second at Rio. Tracy dominated the early going at Miami, but fell victim to mechanical woes there and, at Rio, tapped a wall and was eliminated.

With the retirement of 1992 Long Beach winner Danny Sullivan, the only other former Toyota Grand Prix winner in this year's field is Michael Andretti, who took the checkered flag in 1986.

Andretti, the 1991 PPG Cup Champion, is a veteran with 30 wins under his belt, and will drive the always-quick Kmart/Exaco/Havoline Lola-Ford for Newman/Haas Racing.

His new teammate for 1996 is Christian Fittipaldi, Emerson Fittipaldi's 25-year-old nephew, who will drive the Kmart/Budweiser Lola-Ford. Fittipaldi was runner-up for the 1995 series Rookie of the Year crown.

Add three-time PPG Cup Champion Bobby Rahal (Team Rahal/Miller Racing Reynard-Mercedes) and 1989 IndyCar champion Emerson Fittipaldi (Hogan-Penske Racing/Marl Latin America Penske-Mercedes), and have a solid mix of racing veterans between them, have won 117 IndyCar and more than \$62 million.

But, as is always the case in the IndyCar racing jungle, several "young lions" are beginning to roar—some of them quite loudly.

Jimmy Vasser is one. A resident of San Francisco, he's driven his Target Reynard

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Al Unser Jr.



Unser will drive a 1996 Marlboro/Penske Mercedes-Benz.

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## GRAND PRIX

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Honda got two solid wins—Miami and Australia—in this season's first three races, and he leads the PPG Cup point standings coming into this weekend. Vasser finished eighth in the points last year. His Ganassi racing teammate will be Alex Zanardi, a Monaco resident who won a fourth-place finish at Rio.

Another rising star is Andre Ribeiro, a 20-year-old Brazilian, driving a new International Lola Honda. He captured an emotional home win at his factory on March 17 at the 100th holding off Unser to win the first IndyCar race in Latin America.

Ribeiro also won a race—the New England 200 in New Hampshire—last year.

Scott Pruett, who notched his first IndyCar win last year in Michigan and 4-3-2 finishes in the first three races this year to hold down second place in the PPG Cup point standings. Pruett will drive a 1996 Lotus Ford this weekend for Patrick Racing.

A "local boy"—27-year-old Robby Gordon from Cerritos—won at Phoenix and Detroit last year, finishing fifth in PPG Cup points. Driving the Valvoline/Cummins/Craftsman Reynard-Ford, Gordon started the season with a third at Miami, but contact with a wall relegated him to 15th place at Rio.

Gil de Ferran, 1995 IndyCar Rookie of the Year, was second at Miami in the Pennzoil Reynard-Honda. He won the 1995 season finale at Laguna Seca, edging Christian Fittipaldi for top rookie honors by a slim two points.

This year's hottest rookie, Cana-

dian Greg Moore, has been impressive in the early going in his Player's Ltd./Indeck Reynard Mercedes, leading much of the way at Rio before suffering engine woes. Last year, Moore rewrote the Indy Lights record books, winning 10 of 12 races en route to the series title.

Another Indy Lights graduate (and 1993 series champ) Bryan Herta will drive a Shell/Reynard-Mercedes for Team Rahal. Herta finished 10th at Miami to start the season.

Toyota's formal entry into PPG Cup competition has road racing ace Juan Manuel Fangio II driving for Dan Gurney's All-American Racers and La Canada Flintridge's Jeff Krosnoff in Arciero/Wells Racing colors.

Two F/One veterans, Mark Blundell (England) and Mauricio Gugelmin (Brazil) will drive Reynard-Fords for PacWest Racing, while Parker Johnstone—last year's Michigan 500 pole-sitter—will be behind the wheel of the Motorola Reynard-Honda from Brix Comp-tech Racing.

Motorcycle road racing champion and Indy Lights grad Eddie Lawson moves up to a Lola-Mercedes for Delco Electronics and team owner Rick Gales.

Other drivers to watch include: Scott Goodyear (two career IndyCar wins), driving the Walker Racing Reynard-Ford; ex-F/One driver Stefan Johansson (Alumax Aluminum/Bettenhausen Reynard Mercedes); Canyon Country's Richie Hearn (Ralphs/Food 4 Less Reynard-Ford); Japan's Hiro Matsushita (Panasonic Lola-Ford); F/One veteran Eliseo Salazar (Cristal/Copec/Mobil 1 Lola-Ford); sports car ace Raul Boesel (Brahma Sports Reynard-Ford) and Mexico's Carlos Guerrero (Herdez/Lola-Ford).

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GASOLIN.

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#1 TIRES #1 TIRES

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